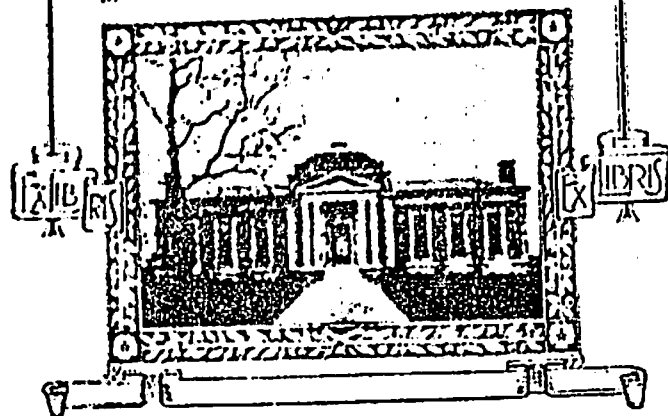


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DUXBURY

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Foreword

# DUXBURY FREE LIBRARY



Duxbury  
Massachusetts

EVERYONE in Duxbury, at one time or another, has taken a guest to see the historic sights. Obviously a tour of the town will vary with each visitor's interests, but there are a certain few musts, and to visit them all takes a plan.

When I first came to live in Duxbury, more than thirty years ago, I was overwhelmed by the aura of history. When I discovered that the deed to my property read "a part of the old Standish and Elder Brewster farms", my interest became dedication. I set about collecting every book, map, pamphlet, and story I could find, I listened to everyone who would tell me about the past, and I visited every nook and corner. With every year and every discovery my love of Duxbury grew until I think it equals that of a native son.

In 1951, I was proud to be appointed Town Historian, an appointment that carries small duties but large obligations. The time has come for me to bring together the scattered stories of the past, stories I have enjoyed discovering, with the hope that they will please old time Duxbury residents, as well as the many who have newly come to live here.

So, for the people in Duxbury and for the visitors I have planned a tour that covers all the well known historic sights, includes some merely interesting, and suggests others for those with special interests and more time. Every foot of land in Duxbury is historic and every acre has a story.

I am grateful to Professor Everett C. Marston for encouragement, advice, and all manner of help.

*Dorothy Wentworth*

Standish Shore  
In the Nook  
September, 1965

Duxbury Free Library

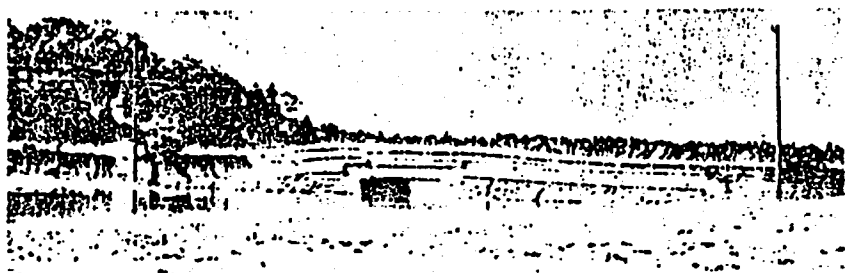
Gift from  
Mrs. J. L. Smith

Hall's Corner in South Duxbury is a convenient point from which to tour the town. It was the center of Duxburrow Town in Pilgrim days and even through the Revolutionary War. The meeting house, burying ground, and training field were all just a bit west, on Chestnut Street. About 1800 the cross roads became a business corner in a small way, soon called Hall's Corner for Captain Daniel Hall, who kept a tavern in his house, about where Cushing's car lot is now.

Drive south on Standish Street over one of the earliest highways in town. Very soon, on the right, you will see a granite marker locating the old Nook Gate. Beyond this point is a peninsula, and across this narrowest point between it and Hall's Corner was once a fence or pallsado, probably to keep cattle from straying. The whole peninsula, 450 acres, is the Captain's Nook, so named when Captain Myles Standish settled on the southeast point. Nook is an old English term for any bit of land off by itself and exactly fits this part of Duxbury, connected to the main part of town only by a very narrow strip of roadway.

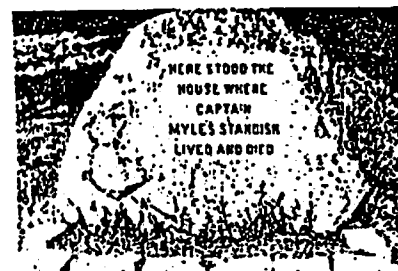
Turn left onto Marshall Street and watch for a fine view at the bridge over Eagles' Nest Creek, a tidal creek emptying into Harden Hill Bay. Elder Brewster probably gave it the name because eagles nested in tall trees on the point just to the left across the bridge, Eagles' Nest Point.

At the end of Marshall Street, turn right and follow the road along to the site of the Standish homestead, called in local fashion "The Standish Cellar Hole." In 1628 Captain Myles Standish brought his wife and three small boys to live here on this bluff, overlooking Duxbury and Kingston Bays. The land then extended farther out into the bay, with three or four acres between the house and the water. On your left, as you face the water, were the planted fields and gardens on land already cleared by the Indians. To the west were orchards and pastures, extending half way up Captain's Hill.



Eagles' Nest Creek Bridge

From his doorway Captain Standish looked across the bay to Plymouth, not too far away at high tide, but nine long miles by foot path. He looked out past Saquish and the Gurnet and saw ships entering the bay, and from the top of Captain's Hill he surveyed the country side in all directions. He has been credited with remarkable judgment in selecting the strategic house site, but actually he drew it by lot, as did all the first settlers.



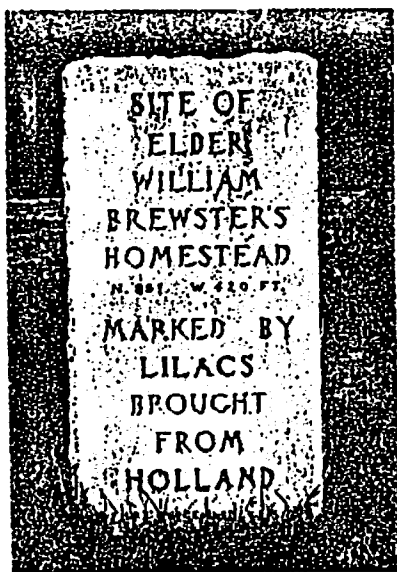
Myles Standish Homesite

The boulder marking the Standish Home Site was dedicated in 1929 by the Ancient and Honorable Artillery and the granite marker nearer the road was erected in 1937 by the Tercentenary Committee. The small granite stones, indicating building outlines, show two rectangular areas with a common side. These probably mark two separate houses that may have used one chimney. There is a tradition that the Standish house burned soon after the Captain died, so perhaps another house was built using the same chimney. At any rate, there were two buildings as there were no houses with wings or ells in Standish's time.

Follow a path down over the hill to a flat stone marking the spring and read the inscription. Note the rip rap protection along the shore that prevents the erosion that ate up several hundred feet of land. Look around at the farm where Myles Standish and his wife, Barbara, raised their family. Of the five children only Alexander and Josiah survived their parents. Charles and John died young and Lora, the only daughter, died at 17 of a broken heart, or so family tradition says. Alexander, the oldest son, inherited the 120 acre homestead and may have lived for a time in his father's house.

Captain Myles Standish died in October, 1656, "He growing ancient, became sicke of the stone, or strangury, whereof, after his suffering of much dolorous paine, he fell asleep in ye Lord and was honorably buried at Duxburrow." The day of his funeral is said to have been one of the stormiest known.

On your way back toward Hall's Corner, stop at the Elder Brewster Lilacs, indicated by a Tercentenary Marker on the left side of Marshall Street. Drive or walk in to see the huge lilac bush covering the cellar hole of the last house at this location. The acre plot, now owned by the Duxbury Rural and Historical Society, is practically the



Brewster Lilacs

same one acre that Elder William Brewster bought from Francis Eaton in 1631. He soon purchased over a hundred acres on both sides of the creek, but his first land was the one acre "garden spot" on which he built his house. With him came his sons, Love and Wrestling, and Richard More, the little orphan waif who lived in the Brewster household. The Elder's wife died in 1627 and his two daughters were married and living in their own homes. Wrestling died young, probably soon after the move to Duxbury, as he is never mentioned in town records. To his father's house Love brought his bride, Sarah Collier and here were born their

children—William, Nathaniel, Wrestling, and Sarah. Nearby, on the west side of the creek, the Elder's oldest son, Jonathan, lived in a house he had built on his father's land. Jonathan had arrived in 1621, on the Fortune, married in Plymouth, and had a grant near Island Creek Pond. This he sold before coming to live in the Nook.

In 1632 Elder William Brewster "gathered the parish" that grew under his guidance into the Town of Duxbury. He died in 1643 and his estate was divided between his two sons, Love getting all east of the creek, and Jonathan west of the creek. How long the Brewster house stood is not known, but by 1648 both Jonathan and Love had left the Nook and the Brewster lands had been sold out of the family.

Next visit the Standish Monument on Captain's Hill. From earliest days it has been called Captain's Hill but actually Captain Standish never owned the entire hill, only half way up the eastern side. The top of the hill and all land to the west was common land, owned by the town well into the 1700s. There is no doubt that Myles Standish, and the Brewsters too, often climbed to the top of the hill for a view as spectacular then as the one you see today.

Captain's Hill was a look out point in early days. Beacons on it were ready for lighting in the Indian Wars, the War of the Revolution, and the War of 1812. Later cattle were pastured here for the hill was

bare land even when the monument was built. The idea of a monument to Standish was conceived by Mr. J. Henry Stickney of Baltimore, who contributed on several occasion to the project. Mr. Stephen M. Allen, a summer resident, gave the land and helped raise funds.

The ground was dedicated in the Fall of 1871 and the railroad to South Duxbury was completed in a hurry to bring the crowds of visitors from Boston. The corner stone was laid the next year with 10,000 people coming to the town for the ceremony. When the construction had reached a height of 70 feet, funds ran out, and the monument was not completed until 1889. The cost was \$36,000, of which \$30,000 was given by about a dozen men. The stones in the arch over the doorway were given by the New England States, and the keystone by President Grant for the United States. The monument is 116 feet high and we have a little story about that. Do you realize that this is the tallest monument in the world? It is, because it's Myles to the top. And to continue in the same vein, the nearby water tank is often referred to as "Mrs. Standish."

Finally, when funds were exhausted and no more were forthcoming and maintenance became a problem, the hill and monument were turned over to the Commonwealth for a State Reservation. The wooded hillside is now a recreation area, with picnic tables among the pines.

From the monument you can look across the bay to Plymouth, to the long sand bar that protects the harbor, out past Saquish and the Gurnet, and to Clark's Island, all within the township of Plymouth. The Gurnet, on the outermost end of a four mile sandy beach, got its name from its resemblance to the head of a fish, the gurnet, found off the coast of Devonshire, and was early called the Gurnet's Head, or the Gurnet's Nose. This 27 acre area was covered with trees in Pilgrim days. It has always been a point of vantage, with a light house as early as 1768. A fort was there in 1776, reactivated in 1812, and another fort in Civil War times.

Clark's Island, named for the mate on the Mayflower, is well known as the place where the Pilgrims took shelter in a storm, early in December, 1620. A small party of Pilgrims and seamen were exploring the coast when a storm forced them to the lee of the island. The next day, the Sabbath, they spent ashore, drying their clothes and equipment. They held a worship service by a great rock near the center of the island, now called Pulpit Rock. Since 1690 the Watson family has owned the island, with the greater part of it, even now, owned by Watson descendents.



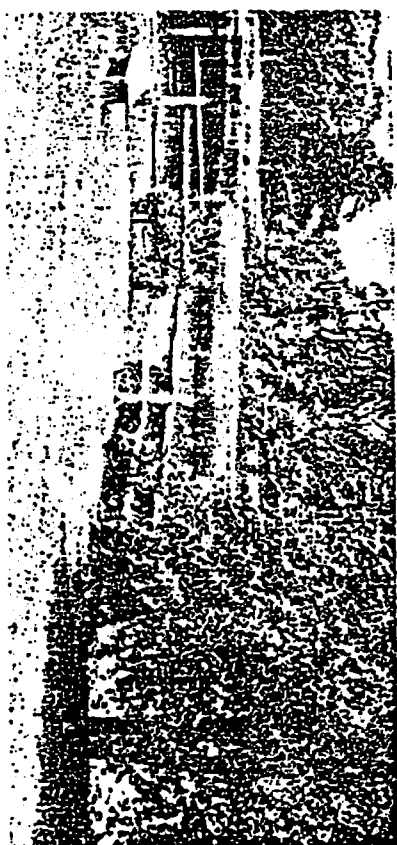
There are enough stories about Clark's Island to fill a book. It has always been a part of the township of Plymouth, and in Pilgrim days was owned wholly by the town. The poor of the colony were allowed to pasture sheep and cut firewood there and in King Philip's War the "Praying Indians" were sent there for their protection. In 1687 some intolerable political boldness on the part of the royal governor, Andros, led to a law suit and then to the sale of the island to private ownership. Then came ship yards for a time but, more important, a prosperous farm. Packet boats, running from Boston to Plymouth, stopped at the island, and island farm produce appeared in both markets. The Watson farmers prospered, built substantial houses and barns, and even had their portraits painted by Copley. One farmer with the soul of a poet attracted the literary great of his day to the island. Louisa Alcott, Henry Thoreau, Adelaide Phillips, and Daniel Webster, all were welcome visitors on Clark's Island. One could tell a love story, a mystery, a tale of murder, or an account of heroism—all these and many more make Clark's Island a fascinating scrap of land.

To the northeast you can see Duxbury Village, Powder Point, and the long bridge to the outside beach, and inland, on a clear day, the Blue Hills. If it is a very clear day you may be able to make out the Provincetown Monument, 20 miles away across the bay.

Now go back to Hall's Corner and follow the second street to the left, Chestnut Street, to the Old Burying Ground. To the right of the gate stood the first meeting house, the site indicated by a granitic marker. As was usual in early days the dead were buried in the church yard. The second meeting house was still farther to the east, its location now shown by another granitic marker. To the left is the Alden Corner, with a stone dated 1697 over the grave of Jonathan Alden, whose parents, John and Priscilla, lie in unidentified graves nearby. Descendants have put stones there in their memory.



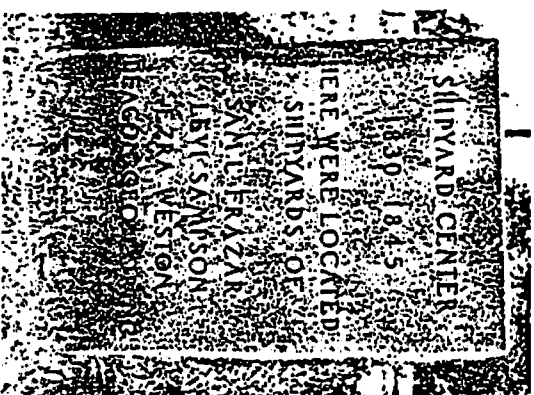
Long Bridge



Duxbury Roadside—property of Duxbury Rural and Historical Society

and sizes, anchored far out in the basin, are a sight to behold. The marine stores and shops are interesting, where many unusual wares, if you are from inland, will intrigue you.

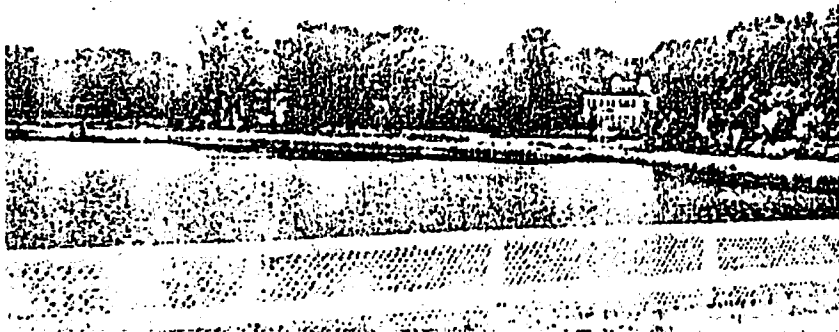
There were numerous ship yards along the shore and at Blue Fish River you can read about one on a Tercenary marker. This was a busy area, with activity from dawn to dusk, when ships were on the ways. To the left of the bridge is the mill pond, flooded all summer when the tide gates are closed.



Historic Marker  
east of Bluefish River Bridge

On both sides of the street, beyond the bridge, are landscaped areas that warrant notice. The Duxbury Rural and Historical Society acquired these bordering lands, had unsightly buildings removed, and landscaped the stretches for all to enjoy. The Duxbury Garden Club maintains the west roadside as a civic project. On the right by the flag pole, is the house of the Duxbury Rural and Historical Society, with a curator to show you the many exhibits, very largely of the shipping era. The building was once a house, then a store, and now a museum.

The house across the road was the Duxbury Bank from 1833 to

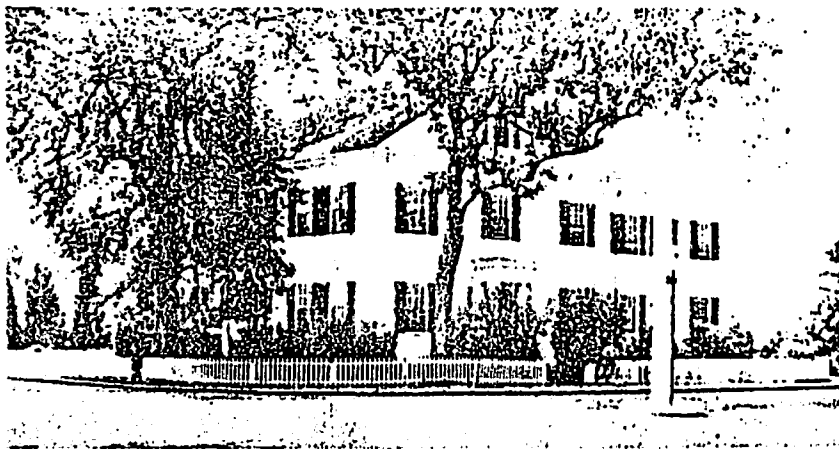


The Mill Pond—west of Bluefish River Bridge

1842 for the convenience of ship owners and sea captains. Later it became the Cable Office, after the cable was laid from France to the Duxbury shore. This was in 1869, and the landing of the cable was an event of considerable importance. The cable is no longer important and the building became a private home in 1952.

Drive on to the right, to a peninsula long called Powder Point. Note more Captains' houses, a marker on the left indicating the Spar Soak, where masts were kept under water until needed for a ship, and the locations of more ship yards. Also note the monument to Dick, just beyond the Spar Soak.

And keeping still to the right, along King Caesar Road, you will



Duxbury Bank (Later, Cable Office)

come to the old King Caesar house and wharf. The big yellow house is the King Caesar House, built by Ezra Weston, Duxbury's most famous ship builder and owner. From the wharf across the street sailed the Weston ships, built by Duxbury men, provisioned from Duxbury farms, and sailed by Duxbury men and boys. The wharf is now owned by the Duxbury Rural and Historical Society and plans are under way to acquire the house.

Farther on is the National Sailors' Home, a last berth for aging merchant seamen. It was once a boys' school in winter and a hotel in summer. Drive on to the end of the Point, where the long bridge spans the bay. The long strip of land beyond it, running to the Gurnet and Saquish is Duxbury Outside Beach. Return by Powder Point Avenue to the flag pole and continue along St. George Street. Here among more old ship builders' houses are the library, police station, and town offices, none very pretentious but a comfortable part of town.

Across from the library is a large yellow house in the midst of well kept acres. It is known as the Wright Estate, for the family that lived there in Victorian elegance late in the last century. It has been empty for many years, except for a family apartment in the ell, and although the owners now are another name, it continues to be called the Wright Estate.

Turn, beyond the Police Station, onto Alden Street, past the Duxbury Schools, and on to the Alden House, on the left after the tennis courts. This house was built in 1653 by Jonathan Alden, son of



King Caesar House

Duxbury Free Library